

My name is Lisa Snipes and I represent Serenity House Counseling Services located in DuPage County, the second most populous county in the state of Illinois. Since 1985, Serenity House has provided outpatient, extended residential and recovery program services to thousands of low income, no income, homeless, unemployed, uninsured adult men and women.

DuPage County has changed quite a bit over the past quarter century but one thing has not. Twenty-six years later, Serenity House remains the only treatment center of its kind providing a full continuum of treatment services to a County with almost 1 million people. A County where 16% of the adult population is considered to be binge drinkers and where heroin overdoses among young adults has increased significantly each year since 2007.

All human and social services agencies have experienced funding cuts during the past several years, yet cuts to substance abuse treatment and prevention in the state of Illinois has been disproportionate and unreasonable. It is unlikely that most for profit companies would be able to survive if their revenues were continuously cut between 11 – 24% each year. As nonprofits, we are held to an even more disadvantage.

These programs are critical for men and women who cannot get care anywhere else. Community based residential treatment centers like Serenity House will essentially be eliminated and the individuals seeking help will be forced back onto the streets, creating an increase in homelessness and crime. We closed eight beds two years ago. Any one of those beds that remain empty could have been used to save the life a young person who died of a heroin overdose or alcoholism. Future cuts will result in entire programs being shut down and the potential for more lives to be lost.